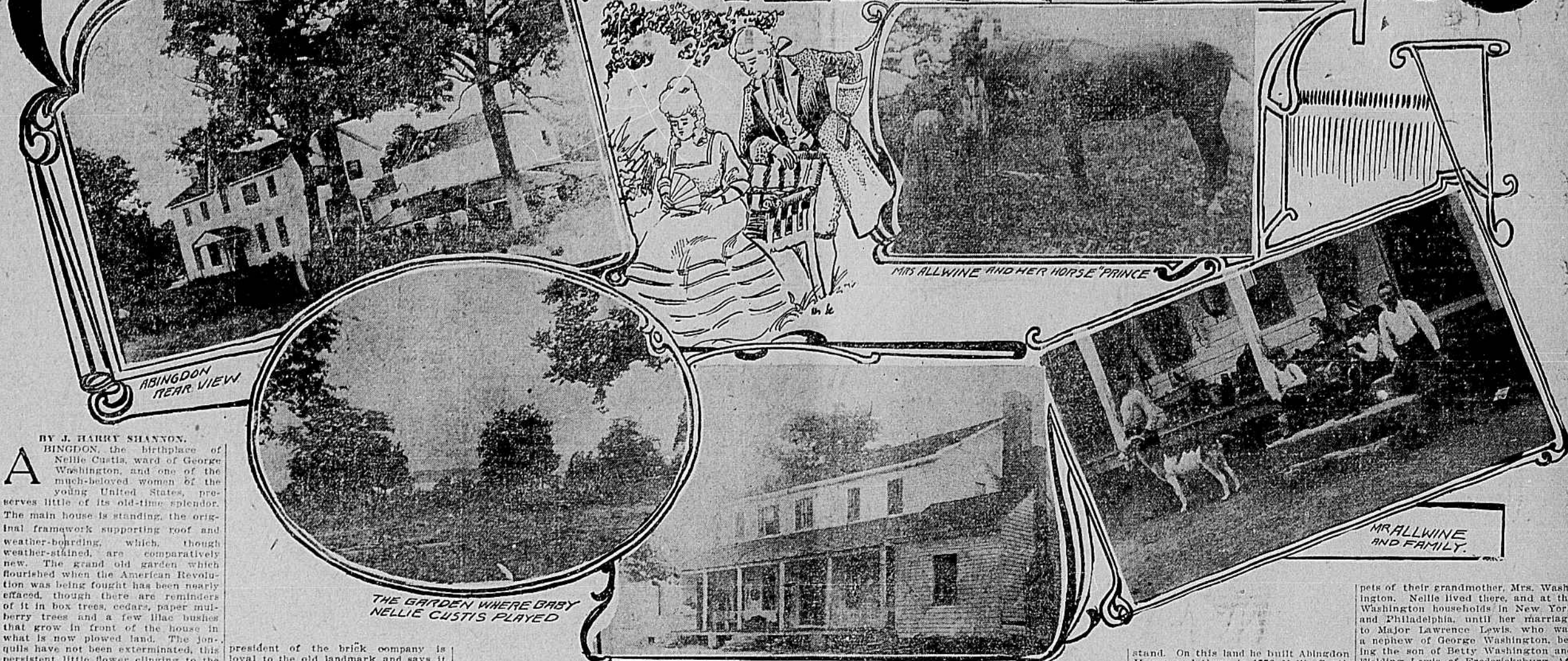


ABINGDON BIRTH PLACE OF NELLIE CUSTIS



ABINGDON VIEW

THE GARDEN WHERE BABY NELLIE CUSTIS PLAYED

ABINGDON FRONT VIEW.

ABINGDON, the birthplace of Nellie Custis, ward of George Washington, and one of the much-beloved women of the young United States, serves little of its old-time splendor. The main house is standing, the original framework supporting roof and weather-boarding, which, though weather-stained, are comparatively new. The grand old garden, which flourished when the American Revolution was being fought, has been nearly effaced, though there are reminders of it in box trees, cedars, paper mulberry trees and a few lilac bushes that grow in front of the house in what is now plowed land. The jonquills have not been exterminated, this persistent little flower clinging to the old home generation after generation. Abingdon was a Custis home and in this way directly or remotely associated with all the Colonial and Revolutionary families of Maryland and Virginia. The house was built by John Parke Custis in 1778. It stands about 200 yards back from the bank of the Potomac River and half a mile north of Four-Mile Run, Va. The house and fields around it are owned by a brick-making company and the house is occupied by D. T. Allwine, foreman of the company, and his family. The

president of the brick company is loyal to the old landmark and says it shall never be molested during his life. John Parke Custis is conspicuous in American history. Not that he was great, but he was a ward of George Washington, and one cannot read much of the life and times of the Father of his Country without encountering the names of the members of the Custis family. John Parke Custis was descended from John Custis, who came to Virginia from Holland in 1649. The fourth John Custis was married to Frances, daughter of Colonel Daniel Parke. An issue

of this marriage was Daniel Parke Custis, who in 1749 was married to Martha, daughter of John Dandridge of Williamsburg. Mr. Custis died in 1757, and in 1759 George Washington and the Widow Custis were married at the lady's home, White House, in New Kent county. At the time of her second marriage Mrs. Washington had two children, Martha Parke Custis, who died of con-

sumption at Mount Vernon in 1773, and John Parke Custis. It was soon after the death of Miss Custis that John Parke Custis was married to Eleanor Calvert, daughter of Benedict Calvert, of Mount Airy, Prince George county, Md., a lineal descendant from Lord Baltimore. Young Custis bought from Grady Alexander 1100 acres of land, on a part of which Arlington and Fort Myer now

stand. On this land he built Arlington House, and there in 1779 Nellie Custis (christened Eleanor Parke Custis) was born. Her sisters, Martha and Elizabeth, were also born in the old house. Her brother, George Washington Parke Custis, the builder of Arlington House, was born at the home of his mother's people in Prince George county, Md. John Parke Custis became an aid on the staff of Washington and died of camp fever near Yorktown in 1781. Washington then adopted Nellie and her brother, George Washington Parke Custis. The two children thereafter made their home at Mount Vernon, the

pets of their grandmother, Mrs. Washington. Nellie lived there, and at the Washington households in New York and Philadelphia, until her marriage to Major Lawrence Lewis, who was a nephew of George Washington, being the son of Betty Washington and Fielding Lewis, of Fredericksburg. After the marriage, Major Lewis built Woodlawn Mansion, a splendid old house, two miles southwest of Mount Vernon and on lands given the young couple by George Washington. George Washington Parke Custis remained at Mount Vernon till the death of Mrs. Washington in 1802, when he built the great house, "Arlington," which later became the home of Robert E. Lee, and is now in possession of the United States government. These pictures were taken at Abingdon last fall.

Large Profits to Egyptian Farmers in Valley of Nile

What Farm Lands Are Worth and What They Yield—Average Profit \$35 Per Acre.

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Tanta, 1907.

FOR THE past month I have been traveling through the farms of the Nile Valley. I have visited many parts of the Delta, and have taken a run through the narrow strip which borders the river for several hundred miles above Cairo. I am writing these notes at Tanta, a city which lies about half way between Cairo and Alexandria and midway between the two branches into which the Nile divides below Cairo and flows from there down into the Mediterranean Sea. I am in a region where the tourist seldom stops, and of which the guide books make little account. I refer to the Delta, that great fan land, which begins at Cairo and in a radius of about one hundred miles, reaches the Mediterranean Sea at Alexandria and Port Said.

Big Profits for Farmers.

The Delta is the heart of Egypt. It contains the bulk of the population. It has the most land, the richest soil and the biggest crops. It is more thickly settled than any other part of the world, and it yields more to the acre than any other region on earth. Its farm lands are worth more than those of any other country, and they bring in a greater product. The average yield for all Egypt nets a profit of \$35 per acre, and that of lower Egypt amounts to much more. Some lands yield so much that they are renting for \$50 per acre and there are instances where \$100 an acre is paid. Such lands bring two or three crops a year, and those who rent them know what they are doing. The renting value of the lands of Egypt in 1893 was over a hundred and ten million dollars, and the selling values of the best lands now range all the way from two hundred to a thousand dollars per acre.

I see in to-day's newspapers an advertisement of the Egyptian Lands Company, announcing an issue of two and one-half million dollars' worth of stock. The syndicate says in its prospectus that it expects to buy 5,000 acres of land at "the low rate of \$200 per acre," and that by spending \$150,000 it can make that land worth \$400 per acre within three years. Some of the land is now worth from \$250 to \$300 per acre, and it is renting for \$20 per acre per annum. The tract lies fifty miles north of Cairo, and is planted in cotton, wheat and barley.

Egypt Belongs to the Egyptians.

Such estates as the above are not often come into the market. The most of Egypt is in small farms, and there are thousands here of one acre or less. The cultivable land, all told, covers only a little over 6,000,000 acres. Indeed, it is not right to think of Egypt as owned by foreigners. Six-sevenths of all the farms belong to the Egyptians, and there are more than a million native land owners. The most of the holdings are small, and over 1,000,000 acres are in tracts of from five to twenty acres each. Many are even less than an acre in size. The number of proprietors is increasing every year, and the fellahs now seem crazy to possess land of their own. It used to be that the Khedive had enormous estates, but when the British government took possession some of the chieftains' lands came to them. They have been divided and have been sold

on long time and easy payments, the lands going to the fellahs. Many who then bought these lands have paid for them out of their crops and all are rich. As it is now there are only 6,000 foreigners who own real estate in the Valley of the Nile.

Among the Farmers.

I wish I could show you the farmers of Egypt as they live here in the Delta. They have one of the garden spots of the globe to cultivate, and the rich mud of which their land is composed is from thirty to sixty feet deep. It rests on the bedrock of the desert, and has been brought down through the ages from the highlands of Abyssinia by the River Nile. The Nile is bringing more every year, and the land, if carefully handled, needs practically no fertilization. As it is now it is yielding two or three crops every twelve months and is seldom idle. Under the old system of basin irrigation the farms lay fallow during the hot months of the summer, but the canals and dams which have of late been constructed enable much of the country to have water all the year round, and as soon as one crop is harvested another is planted.

The Cities of the Delta.

The whole of the Delta is one big farm dotted with farm villages and little farm cities. There are mud towns everywhere, and there are half a dozen agricultural centres of considerable size outside the big cities of Alexandria and Cairo. Take for instance, Tanta, where I am at this writing. It has 57,000 people and is supported by the farmers. It is a cotton market and it has a great fair, now and then, to which the people come from all over Egypt to buy and sell. A little to the east of it is Zagazig, which has more than 40,000 people, and further north, upon the east branch of the Nile, is Mansura, another cotton market, with a rich farming district about it.

Damietta and Rosetta, at the two mouths of the Nile, are also big places, and Damietta, which lies west of the Rosetta branch of the Nile, not far from Lake Edku, is also large. There are a number of towns ranging in size from five to ten thousand, and the whole country is peppered with mud villages. The people do not live on their farms, but in towns. They go out to work in the morning and come back home at night. They usually bring their cattle in with them, and never allow them to graze at will in the field.

How an Egyptian Farm Looks.

Indeed, these farms are nothing like those of the United States. We should have to change the face of our landscape to imitate them. There are no fences, no barns and no haystacks. The country is as bare of such things as an undeveloped prairie. The only boundaries of the estates are the little mud walls, and the fields are divided into patches, some of which are no bigger than a bed quilt. Each patch has its wall, and the furrows within are so made that the water from the canals can irrigate every inch.

Irrigation.

The whole country is cut up by canals. There are large waterways running along the branches of the Nile, and smaller ones connecting with them, to such an extent that the whole country is bound, as it were, in a lacework of little streams from which the water can be let in and out. The draining of the land is quite as important as watering, and the system of irrigation is perfect, inasmuch that it brings the Nile to every part of the country. The methods of raising the water from one level to another are different from ours. In some places there are



steam pumps which do the work, in others gravity is employed, and in some of the higher lands half-naked men labor for months at a time scooping water up in baskets and pouring it out on the fields above. There are also great cranking cog-wheels which work in such a way that the water is caught in clay pots attached to their rims, and thus raised and poured into the little canals through which it flows to the fields. These wheels are moved by blindfolded buffaloes, bullocks or camels. There are thousands of them in the Valley of the Nile.

Queer Farming Methods.

The American farmer would sneer at the old-fashioned way in which the Egyptian fellahs cultivate the soil. He would tell them that they were 2,000 years behind the time, and still, if he were allowed to take their places he would probably ruin the country and himself. Most of the Egyptian farming methods are the result of long experience. In plowing, the land is only scratched, and the farmer is careful not to turn up the earth a foot or so below the surface. This Nile mud is full of salts, and the salt from Abyssinia is of such a nature that the salts may not be raised from below and ruin the crop. In many cases there is no plowing at all. The seed is sown in the soft mud after the water is taken off, and pressed into it with a wooden roller or trodden in by oxen or buffaloes.

Odd Farm Tools.

Where plows are used they are just the same as those of 5,000 years ago. I have seen carvings on the tombs of the ancient Egyptians representing the farm tools used then, and they are about the same as these I see in use today. The average plow consists of a pole about six feet long, fastened to a piece of wood bent inward at an acute angle. The end is shod with iron, and does the plowing. The pole is hitched to a buffalo or ox by means of a yoke and the farmer walks along behind the plow holding its single



handle, which consists of a stick set almost upright into the pole. The harrow of Egypt is a roller provided with iron spikes, and the chief digging instrument is a mattock-like hoe. Much of the land is dug over with the hoe. The grain here is cut with sickles or pulled out by the roots. Wheat and barley are threshed by laying them inside a ring of well-pounded ground and driving a sledge, which rests on a roller over them. The roller has sharp semi-circular pieces of iron set into it, and it is drawn by oxen, buffaloes or camels. Sometimes the grain is trodden out by the feet of the animals without the use of the rollers, and sometimes there are wheels of stone between the sled-runners, which aid in hulling the grain. Pans and beans are also threshed in this way. The grain is winnowed by the wind. The ears are spread out on the threshing floor and the grains pointed out with clubs or shelled by hand. Much of the corn is cut and laid on the banks of the canal until the people have time to husk and shell it. Then the leaves are stripped off the fodder,

and the stalks are tied up and laid on the tops of the houses for fuel.

Camels as Hay Racks.

The chief means of carrying farm produce from one place to another is on bullocks and camels. The camel is taken out into the cornfield while the harvesting is going on. As the men cut the corn, they tie it up into great bundles and hang one on each side of his hump. The ordinary camel can carry about one-fifth as much as one horse hitched to a wagon or one-tenth as much as a two-horse team. Hay, straw and green clover are often carried on camels. Such crops are put up in a baglike network, which fits over the camel's hump, and makes him look like a haystack. Some of the farmers, who cannot afford camels, use donkeys for such purposes, and these little animals may often be seen going along the narrow roads carrying bags of grain balanced upon their backs.

A Land of Wheat and Barley.

I have always looked upon Egypt as devoted to sugar and cotton. I find it

a land of wheat and barley as well. It has also a big yield of clover and corn. The sugar and cotton fields all told cover about a million and a half acres, and they take up only about one-fourth of the tillable land. There is twice as much farming country devoted to grain, wheat and barley, fields cover 1,750,000 acres, and there are more than 1,000,000 acres in Indian corn. There are something like 500,000 acres in millet and sorghum. The delta raises almost all of the cotton and some of the sugar. Central and upper Egypt are grain countries, and in central Egypt Indian and Kafir corn are the chief summer crops. Kafir corn is, to a large extent, the food of the poorer fellahs, and it is eaten by the Bedouins who live in the desert along the edges of the Nile valley.

Stock Farming in Egypt.

Egypt is a great stock country. For its small size it supports a variety of as many animals as any other part of the world. The Nile valley is peppered with camels, donkeys, buffaloes and sheep, either watched by herders or tied to stakes, grazing on clover and other grasses. No animal is allowed to run at large, for there are no fences and the cattle thief is everywhere in evidence. The fellahs are as shrewd as any people the world over, and a sick animal would be difficult to recover.

Much of the stock is watched by children. I see buffaloes feeding in the green fields with naked brown boys sitting on their backs and whipping them this way and that if they attempt to graze on anything but clover. The donkeys, camels and cows are usually tied to stakes and can only feed as far as their ropes will reach.

The camels are fine. Many of them are of the fat-tailed variety, some brown and some white. The goats and sheep feed together, and there are some goats in almost every flock of the former.

The donkey is the chief riding animal. It is either watched by herders or children, and a common sight is the veiled wife of one of these Mohammedan farmers seated astride on a little donkey with her feet high up on its sides in the short stirrups. But few camels are used for riding except by the Bedouins out in the desert, and it is only in the cities that huggies, carriages or wagons are to be seen.

In the Country Villages.

Suppose we go into one of the villages and see how these Egyptian farmers live. The houses are collections of mud huts with holes in the walls for windows. They are scattered along narrow roadways and the dust is thick. The average hut is so low that one can look over its roof when seated on a camel. It seldom contains more than one or two rooms, and usually has a little yard outside, in which the children and chickens roll about in the dust and where the donkey is sometimes tied.

Above some of the houses are towers of mud with holes in their sides. These towers are devoted to pigeons, which are kept by the hundreds and which are sold in the markets as well as some saint or holy man who has lived there in the past. The people worship at such towers and think that prayers made there avail more than those made out in the fields or in their own huts.

There are no water works in the ordinary country village. If the locality is close to the Nile, the drinking and washing water is brought from there to the huts on the heads of the

A Land of Wheat and Barley. Farm Villages and Farmers' Homes—Queer Methods of Threshing.

women, and if not it comes from the village well. It is not difficult to get water by digging down a few feet anywhere in the Nile Valley, and every town has its well. The village well is usually shaded by palm trees. It is there that the men gather about and gossip at night, and there the women come to draw water and carry it home upon their heads.

How the Farmers Live.

The farmers' houses have no gardens about them, and no flowers or other ornamental decoration. The surroundings of the towns are squalid and mean, and the peasants have no comforts in our sense of the word. They have but little furniture inside their houses. Many of them sleep on the ground or on mats, and many wear the same clothing at night that they wear in the daytime. Out in the country shoes, stockings and underclothes are comparatively unknown, and it is only upon dress-up occasions that a man or woman puts on slippers.

The cooking and housekeeping is done entirely by the women. The chief food is a coarse bread made of corn or millet. This is baked in thick cakes, and is broken up and dipped into a kind of a beef stew seasoned with salt, pepper and onions. Almost every sort of vegetable grows well here, and onions and tomatoes are raised for export. The ordinary peasant seldom has meat, and it is only the rich who can afford mutton or beef. At a big feast on the occasion of a wedding or a funeral, some one brings in a sheep which has been cooked whole. It is eaten without forks, and is torn limb from limb, being cut out by the guests with their knives.

Every one in Egypt who can afford it smokes. The men have pipes of various kinds, and of late many cigarettes have been coming into use. A favorite smoke is with a water pipe, which is used in the morning, the pipe being drawn by means of a long tube through a bowl of water, upon which the pipe sits, so that it comes cool into the mouth.

Why Thirteen is Unlucky.

It is usually stated that the superstitious objection to sitting thirteen at a table in Christian countries was based on the fact of the Last Supper, when Christ and his twelve disciples sat down to a table together, making thirteen. But in the Norse mythology, which is supposed to antedate the introduction of Christianity among the Norsemen, we find the superstition referred to the fact that at a banquet of the gods, Loki, the spirit of mischief, intruded on the banquet, making thirteen at the table, where there was a light, and Baldur, a young hero especially loved by all the gods, was killed. For the fact is, the objection to this number seems to have existed even before Christianity. Among the Aztecs, the aborigines of Mexico, it was believed to have magic powers, and of late many have found in other Indian tribes. Among the ignorant blacks at the South the fear of this number in any connection is actually absurd, but whether they have borrowed this idea from their imperfect knowledge of Christianity or whether it is an ancient superstition, it is impossible to say. For the superstition has a strong hold everywhere, even among those who should know better than to be swayed by it. In Italy, the number thirteen is never used in making up the numbers of the favorite lotteries, and in Paris it is omitted in numbering the houses on the streets.—Housekeeper.